

One Perfect Day: The Selling of the American Wedding

REBECCA MEAD. Penguin Press, \$24.95 (236p) ISBN 978-1-59420-088-5

In its nascence in the American lexicon, the term "Bridezilla" has inspired articles, reality television and water-cooler tales of brides gone mad. This phenomenon piqued *New Yorker* staff writer Mead's interest, sending her on a three-year investigation of the current American wedding and the \$161-billion industry that

spawned it. "Blaming the bride," she writes, "wasn't an adequate explanation for what seemed to be underlying the concept of the Bridezilla: that weddings themselves were out of control." Interviewing wedding industry professionals and attending weddings in Las Vegas, Disney World, Aruba and a wedding town in Tennessee, Mead ventures beyond the tulle curtain to reveal moneymaking ploys designed around our most profound fears as well as our headiest happily-ever-after fantasies. Goods and services providers alter marital traditions—and even invent new ones—to feed their bottom line. Stores vie for bridal registry business in hopes of gaining lifelong customers. Women swoon for what retailers call "the 'Oh, Mommy' moment" in boutique fitting rooms—an unsettling contrast to the Chinese bridal gown factory workers who make them possible, sleeping eight to a room and scraping by on 30 cents an hour. Part investigative journalism, part social commentary, Mead's wry, insightful work offers an illuminating glimpse at the ugly underbelly of our Bridezilla culture. (May)